

The Governor's Lady

A Novelization of
Alice Bradley's Play

By GERTRUDE STEVENSON

Illustrations from Photographs of the Stage Production

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CHAPTER IX—Continued.

"Mrs. Slade," Merritt began, and took a quick, apprehensive look in the direction of the kitchen. "Take a hint from me! You give it to him! Soak it to him! He's used you like a dog! I came here today to find out if you meant to fight him. I had an idea that you did. I'll help you do him up."

"You're talking against the man I lived with most of my life," and she fixed an angry eye on him. "You get right out of my house, sir."

"But—" protested Merritt, rising. "Go right along, sir! Go along!" and Mary raised her voice as her temper got the better of her.

Hayes, hearing the loud tones, appeared at the kitchen door munching a biscuit.

"How dare you!" he heard Mary exclaim. "You can't abuse my husband to me!"

Merritt looked once at Hayes and once at Mary. Then he went.

Hayes stood taking large bites out of the biscuit, looking at Mary with an amused smile.

"I'll say all I want about Slade," Mary sputtered. "But I won't let anyone else do it."

"I've noticed that," returned Hayes, dryly.

"And I can tend to my own affairs, too."

"I've noticed that, too," still dryly.

"I'm kind of wound up," Mary confessed. "I'll just wash my face and cool off. Then we'll have dinner, Rob."

She had no sooner left the room than a knock came at the door. It appeared to be Mary Slade's day "at home."

"Oh, the dev—" muttered Rob as he started toward the door. "These d—d curious neighbors!"

He opened the door abruptly. Instead of the gossiping neighbors he had expected he was confronted by Katherine Strickland.

CHAPTER X.

Katherine was just as much amazed at meeting Hayes as he was at finding her at the door.

"I didn't know you would be here," Katherine apologized, "otherwise I—"

Bob's expression silenced her. She had never seen such an expression in his eyes before. Katherine was radiantly beautiful today. She knew it. More than that, she had taken particular care to gown herself in an exquisite afternoon dress of dull blue, a gown that had been draped according to her own fastidious design. But in Bob's eyes there was no response to her beauty or her clothes or her poise. He didn't even attempt to disguise his disgust at her effrontery in invading Mrs. Slade's retreat.

"I want to see Mrs. Slade," Katherine finally announced.

"Upon my word!" his voice was low, but hoarse. "I never heard of such a thing as your coming to this house. What do you want here? Want to tell that little woman you're after her? What do you want here?"

"Will you kindly tell Mrs. Slade that I am here?" Katherine's eyes were hard and her mouth a thin strip of determination.

"First, I want to know what you're going to say to her," Hayes demanded.

"Whether I say it today or tomorrow doesn't matter," Katherine answered, quietly. "I'll say it. So you might as well let her know I'm here—and go."

"All right, but do you think you had better risk it? You look out! When she discovers—" Mary's entrance at this moment checked Hayes' warning. She looked questioningly, first at Katherine, then at Hayes.

"I'll be back, auntie, in a very few minutes," Hayes remarked. "I've got to work on my car. This is Miss Strickland," and he shut the door.

"Oh—Miss Strickland," repeated Mary, very much pleased, but very much in awe of the senator's daughter. "You called on me once before, but I had a headache. I've often wished since I hadn't had it. Won't you take off your things and sit down. It's very kind of you to call."

Katherine thanked her and sat down. She had not expected to find such a sweet little woman in Mrs. Slade. The woman was so little, so fragile, so harmless and helpless in appearance. Even the old-fashioned cottage made its appeal to the girl's sensitive spirit; the shabby furniture gave her a vision of what Slade's earlier life with this woman must have been. Instead of her usual poise, she found herself quite a little at a loss to know what to do or say before the frank, sincere gaze of Slade's wife.

The questions she had meant to blurt out soon after her arrival remained mutely on her lips. Instead she found herself answering the questions that Mary Slade was asking.

She found herself telling the woman of her own struggles against increasing poverty, talking of her own hopes and ambitions.

"Mrs. Slade, I don't say this is a social call," Katherine found herself as frank as the woman at the other side of the table.

"You—you know all about my trouble, Miss Strickland?"

"Yes, that's what I'd like to talk to you about, without offending you, if I might. You see, this trouble comes very near to us—"

"How does it come near to you, my dear?" Mary interrupted.

"Mrs. Slade," Katherine set herself bravely to what she knew would be a bitter task. "My father is virtually a beggar. You know how we live! People think we're rich. Well—we're poor! We're getting poorer every day. Every penny is tied up in—politics. My father was the first to see Mr. Slade's strength. He is now living on Mr. Slade's future."

Mary nodded. "Mr. Slade is a very important man," Katherine went on, "but no matter how much people admire him he can easily be ruined by a scandal."

"I haven't any desire to ruin my husband," Mary protested, quickly.

"No, I'm sure you haven't," Katherine was more at ease as the conversation progressed. "But you being here and he being a few miles away, of course, there's no excuse to be offered, is there? It is a scandal. Politically and socially he's ruined unless he comes back here, or you—" Katherine paused, for the simple reason that she didn't have the heart to finish.

"Or I go away," Mary completed the sentence. "Yes, and if I go away—I know what that means. No, I'm not going away. Miss Strickland, you tell your father and his friends, from me—"

"Oh, no—please," Katherine objected. "I came quite alone, unknown to him."

"Well, you might as well tell him or anyone else that wants to know—"

"Oh, no, I couldn't, Mrs. Slade. I

couldn't carry any messages. I came here to find out—" Katherine checked herself. The situation was suddenly becoming embarrassing.

"Well, now, you know," Mary answered, "there won't be any divorce."

"I see—yes—" and she took up her gloves, preparatory to going.

"I'm very sorry," Mary explained, "that others should suffer through this, but that's how it stands. For once in his life Dan Slade is not going to have his own way." She smiled. "Now, let's talk of something else. I hear you draw pictures of your dresses—designs. Is that one of your own gowns?"

"Oh, yes," Katherine replied, amiably. "I often do little sketches for the fashion magazines, and I do busts. My friends think it's a fad, when as a matter of fact, it's for money, for clothes and things."

"I had no idea," Mary was all sympathy and understanding. "You're so young and need pretty things. That's one of the joys I've missed—dressing a daughter! You know," she began, suddenly, "I've heard a great deal of you, and you're not at all the young lady I supposed you were. You're just as simple and sweet and natural as you can be. And your affection for your father!"

Mary got up and, selecting the loveliest rose from the cluster in the vase, carefully wiped the stem and handed it to Katherine.

"Won't you stay for a bit of dinner? Better have just a bite."

"I must go," returned Katherine absently. Somehow or other she hadn't quite expected this sort of a visit.

"I hope I haven't said anything to trouble you," she hastened to add. "What I said about this ruining Mr. Slade is just an echo of what his friends say."

"My dear child, you haven't hurt my feelings. Perhaps you know something I don't know?" she asked, suddenly. "Do sit down again. Stay just a minute. I'd like to talk some more. You're out in the world and I'm quite alone. People aren't as frank with me as they might be. Suppose I'm your mother—just let me say it—and my husband wanted a divorce—he's old enough to be your father—we'd all get together to find out why, wouldn't we?"

"I suppose we would," and Katherine took the chair Mrs. Slade had indicated.

"What I want to know is why people think Mr. Slade wants a divorce? Why, isn't a separation bad enough?"

"I don't know that I—" For the life of her she could think of no answer to this directly simple line of questioning.

"Well, there's only one reason I ever knew of," Mary continued, "when a man's so insistent. I guess you know the kind of reason I mean—a well—a younger reason."

"You mean—a woman?" Katherine's voice was cold and firm.

"Yes, I do. It doesn't seem to surprise you," Mary declared suddenly noticing that Katherine had known at once just what she had in mind. "Miss Strickland, I think you know something more than you're telling me and you hate to say it. What would you do in my place?" she asked as Katherine's silence gave virtual assent.

"I?" Katherine asked vacantly. She thought a moment. Then quickly, earnestly: "I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd do what they all do. I'd save what's left of the affection I once had. It's no use standing over a man with the end of a chain in your hand; that doesn't get him back. I'd take his money, the luxury—I'd simply—well, I'd dissolve partnership and I'd go. I'd go to some place where life interested me and get what I could out of it. I'd live as I never had lived, and I'd make him pay."

"That's a new idea to me," Mary was listening intently. "I never thought of such a thing."

"And supposing, Mrs. Slade, that another woman did appear. I don't say there is one, but—"

"But is there?" Mary persisted. "I didn't say so. But I do know

this: If we do love anyone, and they really love us, they never get over it and we never get over it, either, for there's always something in our hearts that we can't—we can't forget. And take a man who's not young, like Mr. Slade, why, no other woman could be anything at all to him—I mean anything more than something to keep up his position."

"I see," replied Mary, thoughtfully. "Someone to sit in his box at the opera—someone to go about and do him credit. Miss Strickland," she paused a moment and looked at Katherine earnestly, "there is such a woman, and you know it. I believe, Miss Strickland, I believe the Lord sent you straight here to me."

"I only came to find out what you intend doing," Katherine answered, alarmed and not knowing exactly what Mrs. Slade meant. "I mustn't trouble you any longer."

"You're no trouble at all," said Mary, detaining her. "It's the doubt that troubles me. Miss Strickland, I know perfectly well you must have heard people talking. The words I want are in your mouth. Come, now, honestly tell me," she coaxed, "who is the hussy?"

"Mrs. Slade," exclaimed Katherine, haughtily, unconsciously drawing herself up.

"I ought not to have used that word, I know," Mary drew a long breath, "but I—you can't blame me. Why, do you know what it would mean? It would mean two Mrs. Slades here in this town or — or — anywhere he's known. Two Mrs. Slades after all these long, respectable years! Why, it isn't human!" and she held up two accusing fingers. "Oh, no! Every one would be asking: 'Which Mrs. Slade is that—the old one or the new one he got?' He'd be out with Mrs. Slade No. 2, while Mrs. Slade No. 1 was home breaking her heart. Well, they don't catch me like that! Not much! If that's what it means, there's only going to be one Mrs. Slade, and I wouldn't stoop to be that one. I fought for his name when he was free, but if he isn't now, I wouldn't haggle over a man who didn't respect me enough to—No! She could take him and his name and his money and—I'd go to where people didn't know the sight of my face. Miss Strickland, there is another woman, and you know it. Out with it, like a good girl. Just say it—and I'll take your advice. I'll make the best of life and go. Just say it!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

PLAY NECESSARY FOR CHILD

Most Important for His Proper Development, and There Should Be Safe Places Provided.

"And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Thus Zechariah in 520 B. C. But there were fewer motor cars in Zechariah's day than there are in ours. The children now need, for their play, some place safer than the street, declares the Craftsman.

More important than the playground, however, is the play. It is well that children should play in a safe place, but it is absolutely necessary that they should play somewhere if they are to grow up at all. For there is no doubt now, I think, in the minds of educators that play builds the child. It is the method that nature has provided for his development. Play indeed is the positive side of the whole phenomenon of infancy. The reason the higher animals, and man above all, are born so helpless and unformed is that they may be finished by this special method. It is for the sake of play that infancy exists, that there is such a thing as a child at all. The child who is deprived of his chance to play is deprived of his opportunity to grow up.

Left Eye for Microscope.

In microscope work use the left eye rather than the right, says the American Machinist. Astigmatism and other eye troubles occur more frequently to the right eye.